ETHICS – PROMOTING ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRITY

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The moral conduct of our society has long been a topic of debate. The discussion has lately included public officials and members of the fire service.

The problem has been establishing consistent guidelines that all personnel can employ to insure appropriate behavior in all situations.

The purpose of this project was to explore critical elements of ethical behavior that could be used to develop a code of ethics for the Leawood Fire Department. The research was evaluative and was conducted using periodicals, books, journals and surveys. The research was able to answer the following questions:

1. How can fire departments insure ethical behavior of all employees?

2. Should fire executives and subordinates perform to the same standards of behavior?

3. What are the critical elements of ethical behavior?

The results indicated that few fire departments had established a code of ethics for their members. Most believed that executives should lead by ethical example. The critical elements of ethical behavior were revealed to be compassion, respect, honesty, fairness and responsibility.

The author recommended that the Leawood Fire Department develop a survey for the membership of the department and implement a code of ethics policy. The author further recommended training for employees on ethical issues and behavior.

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of ethics has challenged mankind since the beginning of time. Ancient philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, have wrestled with questions of moral conduct and fairness for centuries. Ethics can be defined as "the discipline which deals with human character and conduct, of distinction between right and wrong, and moral duty and obligations to the community" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1985, page 610).

The debate of ethical practices continues today in virtually all facets of our daily lives. "A recent poll shows that 76% of adults surveyed believe that the United States is in moral and spiritual decline" (Fineman, 1994, page 31). Private sector executives have increasingly focused attention on the ethics of both supervisors and employees. Many business schools have begun to include ethics courses in requirements for management/administration degrees. More and more, honesty and fairness have become pertinent to government officials. Ethical and moral dilemmas have plagued almost all presidential administrations from Nixon to Clinton.

The public has, for the most part, placed great trust in the fire service and often has listed the fire department as the agency they most trust among public entities. Firefighters and their officers have been entrusted to appropriately handle an array of community assets from citizens and their property to tax dollars and equipment. While members of the fire service depend upon personal standards developed through individual experience and upbringing, a variety of challenges often create ethical ambiguities for fire offices and their subordinates.

The problem has been establishing consistent ethical guidelines that all personnel can employ to ensure appropriate behavior in all situations.

The purpose of this project is to explore critical elements of individual and organizational ethics that can be used to develop a code of ethics for the Leawood Fire Department. The research will be evaluative and will consist of a thorough literature review and a survey instrument. The literature review will include periodicals, journals, and textbooks. A survey instrument will be developed to determine important characteristics of ethical behavior and perception of current ethical stature.

The questions, which will be answered through the use of evaluative research, are:

1. How can fire departments promote ethical behavior of all employees?

2. Should fire executives and subordinates be held to the same standards of behavior?

3. What are the critical elements of ethical behavior?

Because fire service members function as fiduciary agents, appropriate decision-making necessitates high degrees of integrity and fairness. To properly conduct public business, public servants must adhere to high standards of behavior.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The nature of the fire service demands a great deal of public trust. Central to this trust is an expectation that any moral or ethical issues will be dealt with in a manner that promotes the welfare of the citizens. The nature of the fire service also demands ethical behavior of its members. Any betrayal of that behavior, whether real or perceived, could negatively impact the ability of the service to effectively accomplish its mission.

The management of the Leawood Fire Department has, over the years, been accused by its members of inappropriate or unethical behavior. It was not uncommon for a former chief officer to

contrive conflicts between subordinates for the purpose of behavior modification of one or both of the

subordinates. The chain of command was strictly enforced by chief officers on the incident scene but

company officers were often bypassed during subordinate grievances without penalty or counseling by

the same chief officers. Actions such as these led to general distrust of management and low morale

within the department.

In 1993, the Leawood Fire Department underwent re-organization precipitated by the

retirement of the Assistant Chief. The Fire Chief did not desire to replace the Assistant Chief with

another 40 hour per week employee, and implemented a plan to replace the retiring 40 hour per week

employee with three Battalion Chiefs working 24 hour shifts and a 40 hour per week Training Officer

with rank equivalent to Battalion Chief. Job descriptions for the three Battalion Chiefs' positions were

posted within the department and applications were requested from qualified candidates. Candidates

had to be company officers with at least five years in rank to qualify for Battalion Chief. The selection

process was to include a written test, an assessment center, and an oral interview. Only three members

applied for the positions and, because all three met the posted qualifications, all were promoted without

testing.

By contrast, the training officer's job description was not posted and applicants were not

solicited. The position was filled, without discussion or formal notification, by appointment of the Fire

Chief. The new Training Officer had been employed by the department for seven years at the time of

promotion and had attained the rank of Apparatus Operator/Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)

but had not served in any supervisory capacity in the Leawood Fire Department.

Within the next fourteen months, the Training Officer's position received four title changes and a

promotion in rank. The new job description, called "Operations Chief", was virtually the same position

as the vacated Assistant Chief's position. Part of the Operations Chief duties included supervising and coordinating the activities of the Battalion Chiefs. The Operations Chief was appointed Fire Chief in March, 1996 upon retirement of the Fire Chief who implemented the reorganization.

Predictably, the perception among the members of the department was that chief officers were primarily interested in goal accomplishment even at the expense of ethical practices. Attempts to impose new standards or implement new programs within the department have usually been met with reactions ranging from skepticism to open opposition. Often, this resistance was based upon differing beliefs and values. The executive leadership course at the National Fire Academy teaches that "principled leadership encourages others to act according to the values and beliefs we share" (Executive Leadership, 1996, page SM 3-33). The need for effective, trusting relationships between fire department managers and the members they charge with task accomplishments is sufficiently relevant to submit this research as the project required for the Executive Leadership Course of the Executive Fire Officer Program.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Because societies and cultures are evolutionary, the value systems of the individuals and organizations within those societies and cultures are also evolutionary. Values are not inherited traits such as hair color and physical stature, rather they are learned characteristics brought about by exposure to various events, environments, and role models. Ethics, then, "is largely a question of subjectivity that needs to be addressed realistically and with flexibility" (Lonkevich, 1997, page 26).

Ethical behavior is more than a matter of legality. According to Rushworth M. Kidder, President of the Institute for Global Ethics, "obedience to the enforceable is the law, ethics is obedience

to the unenforceable" (Kidder and Lloyd, 1997, page 147). Dennis Chookasian, Chairman and CEO

of CNA Insurance Companies agrees that "improper acts are much harder [to prevent] than illegal acts

because they are more subjective" (Lonkevich, 1997, page 26). Many companies have created

corporate ethics departments and implemented behavioral standards to assist employees in making

proper decisions. "Ethics must transmit, from within constraining surrounding decisions and actions,

critically selected value allegiances and criteria" (Goulet, 1997, page 1166). Ethics is about behavior

and about ways of thinking, especially in situations where our choice can affect the dignity and well-

being of others.

In the same manner that corporations expect certain standards of behavior from their

employees, taxpayers and citizens expect certain levels of conduct from their employees-public

servants. In a recent poll of 1,000 U.S. voters, 84 percent of the respondents said that "our

governments would be better if policies were more directed by moral values" (Kidder, 1995, page 8).

Public servants, by definition are supposed to serve the public and "must understand and accept certain

standards of conduct. There are certain things that one cannot do and still be acting as a public servant"

(Clark, 1991, page 40). The individual ethics of firefighters and officers directly impact the ability of the

service to perform its mission, yet, "today's public managers face increasingly complex dilemmas, often

having to weigh personal and professional values against public opinion and the law" (Bonzek, 1991,

page 19).

Obviously, fire executives have responsibility for the behavior of department members.

According to Richard A. Marinucci, "Leaders-the Chiefs in many departments-are responsible for

establishing and maintaining a climate conducive to the department…ethical code" (Marinucci, 1992,

page 80). Management and staff should continually promote ethical behavior by their actions. Setting

an ethical example encourages others to conduct themselves accordingly. Ethical behavior establishes credibility and distinguishes the capable leader. "The most effective leaders and managers….achieved success by dealing with others ethically" (Fotis, 1996, page 46). Conversely, "if leaders routinely engage in dirty work place actions, employees will assume such behavior is acceptable" (Matzler, 1992, page 158). What the fire service need, then, are "people who can both understand and excel at the practical demands of the business while remaining introspective and thoughtful in their pursuit of moral excellence" (Ryan and Scott, 1995, page 460).

As previously stated, ethics are subjective in nature and therefore, difficult to define. Certain values however, are found in most discussions of ethics and proper conduct. Perhaps the most frequently mentioned of these values is honesty. Harvard University Ex-President Derek Bok believes that "you should not obtain your ends through lying and deceitful practices and you have a responsibility to keep [your] promises" (Kidder, 1995, page 6). The 1994 code of ethics of the American Society for Public Administration (Appendix B) advises to "maintain truthfulness and honesty and to not compromise them for advancement, honor, or personal gain" (ASPA, 1994). The proliferation of technology, especially computers, highlight the need for honesty. "Nothing can be kept hidden or secret-not in computers, not in the halls of government, nothing". (Kidder, 1995, page 6). People will feel much more comfortable when dealing with honesty because there is no guilt or stress of disclosure.

Another common value of ethical behavior is fairness. "Standards of behavior express the basic values that underlie public service, including fairness, integrity, and professionalism" (Clark, 1991, page 37). A simplistic approach to fairness is the Golden Rule.

To bring ethics from the abstract to the real world, we have the Golden Rule-Do unto others as you would others do unto you. While it may seem old-fashioned, …it is the foundation of family and civilization as we know it (Fortis, 1996, page 46).

James A. Joseph supports this view of fairness. "I relate fairness to treating people as I would want to be treated. I think that the [Golden Rule]…ought to be part of any ethic for the future" (Kidder, 1995, page 6). Fairness promotes equality of action regardless of specific circumstances.

Virtually all ethical behavior includes respect or tolerance. The Canadian Treasury Board states that "each public servant has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, both by supervisors and by the institution as a whole….each is entitled to feel like a valued member of a larger enterprise" (Clark, 1991, page 39). Respect for others is not limited to having regard for the feeling of others but includes tolerance of differing viewpoints. "It is a question of respect for the dignity of each of us…if you have a different idea from mine, it's not because you're worse than me. You have a right to think differently" (Kidder, 1995, page 8). The idea of dissent without fear of reprisal is the basis for employee grievance policies.

Another important characteristic of moral conduct is responsibility or accountability. Accountability of individuals for their actions upholds the elements of mutual trust between managers and employees.

> It is the individual public servants who exercise judgement..and
> it is the people who are accountable. Each public servant is a
> link in the accountability chain and each recognizes a duty to do
> his or her work in a conscientious and professional manner (Clark
> 1991, page 42).

Personal and organizational responsibility strengthens the rights of the individual rather than decreasing or subordinating them. "The talk is all of rights, demands, and desires. But the important thing is not just to assert right but to ensure that they are protected…which rests wholly on the principle of responsibility" (Kidder,1991, page 7). Personal responsibility decreases the likelihood of unethical or questionable actions and maintains the principle of mutual trust.

Graca Machel, former first lady of Mozambique, states that love and compassion are essential to proper behavior. "The base of moral behavior is first of all solidarity, love and mutual assistance" (Kidder, 1991, page 4). Kindness and benevolence promote public interest beyond serving oneself by helping or assisting each other (ASPA, 1994). Tribal Chief Richard Snake of Nebraska agrees that "we have to be compassionate with one another and help one another, to hold each other up, support one another down the road of life" (Kidder, 1991, page 5) Compassion and solidarity imply assistance and cooperation in spite of personal or political differences.

Ultimately, ethics will define any organization. Every organization, fire departments included, needs to set its own standards and expectations to enhance proper conduct and avoid ambiguity. Chief executives and key staff must lead by example to avoid employee resentment and public criticism. While organizations should set standards and adopt codes of conduct, all individuals within those organizations must support ethical behavior. "Without the principle of individual conscience, every attempt to institutionalized ethics must necessarily collapse" (Kidder, 1991, page 7). Ethical behavior implies free choice and consistency of action. According to Rushworth Kidder, discussions of global ethics frequently include five core values: honesty, fairness, responsibility, love and respect. Having a standard for dealing fairly and predictably in all situations makes individuals more effective and self-assured in the performance of their job.

PROCEDURES

Research Methodology

The desired outcome of this research was to identify critical elements of ethical behavior both individually and organizationally. The research method was evaluative and consisted of literature review and surveys.

The literature review revealed several core values for ethical behavior and some methods to insure organizational ethics. The review also contributed to some of the questions for the survey instrument and the conclusions reached by the research.

The survey evaluated ethics policies used in a variety of fire departments across the United States. It also explored characteristics perceived as critical for ethical behavior.

Population

The survey was created and distributed to two groups. Survey participants represented variations in geographic location, demographics, department size and type, and age.

In late January, 1998, the survey, a cover letter, and a stamped, addressed return envelope were mailed to 23 members of the September, 1997 Executive Leadership Course at the National Fire Academy. The respondents were fire department members from across the United States with a rank structure primarily in upper management. The instrument (Appendix A) was a questionnaire requesting responses to nine questions.

The same instrument was presented in February, 1998 to 42 employees of the Leawood Fire Department. The respondents ranged from entry level firefighters to Battalion Chiefs. The surveys were distributed in envelopes to station officers with instructions to issue the survey to shift members at their

earliest convenience. They were further instructed to collect surveys the same day and place in return envelope, seal envelope and return.

Collection Of Data Survey

All 67 surveys were returned. The responses to questions 1-5 were maintained in two groups since one group was from the same department. The responses to questions 6-9 in both samplings were combined and divided into categories. The totals (Appendix A) were converted to percentages rounded to whole numbers as presented in the results section of this paper.

Assumptions and Limitations

It was assumed that survey respondents possessed accurate information concerning policies and regulations of their departments. Although two surveys were conducted, the quantity of respondents was not assumed to be an accurate sampling of the fire service. All responses were assumed to be truthful and without prejudice.

The research and survey were limited due to time constraints. The research was intended to provide specific information for the Leawood Fire Department and was not intended to provide a model for others.

RESULTS

1. *How can fire departments promote ethical behavior of all employees?* The literature review revealed that ethics or ethical behavior is subjective in nature and not merely a matter of right vs. wrong or legality. One of the methods used to promote appropriate conduct is implementing or formalizing ethics policies and guidelines. Many organizations have established ethics departments for their employees. The survey revealed that only 17% of the departments surveyed had a written policy or

code of ethics. All of the departments reporting a written policy also reported that it was regularly

enforced. 21% of those surveyed indicated the rules and regulations of the department included

unethical behavior as cause for disciplinary action, however, one of those departments stated that

disciplinary action was not regularly enforced. Interestingly, not all of the departments with a written

policy addressed ethical behavior as cause for disciplinary action. While the policies may have included

punitive measures for non-compliance, the survey instrument may also need to be altered to remove the

ambiguity. Only one department conducts ethics training for its employees.

2. *Should fire executives and subordinates be held to the same standards of behavior?* The

literature review showed that a fiduciary relationship exists between citizens and members of the fire

service. This relationship dictates that executives and subordinates alike maintain high ethical standards.

The literature also revealed the fire service leaders are responsible for establishing and maintaining

behavioral standards consistent with values held by the community. While the literature did not reveal

that moral conduct by fire executives would necessarily transfer to subordinates, unethical practices by

chief officers could lead subordinates to assume that the behavior was acceptable. The survey revealed

that thirty nine of the respondents (58%) did not think that executives and subordinates should be held

to the same ethical standard. 77% of those in favor of a disparate standard placed a higher standard of

behavior on fire executives than on subordinates.

3. *What are the critical elements of ethical behavior?* The literature review and the survey

instrument revealed common characteristics critical to ethical behavior. The predominate characteristics

revealed by the literature review appear to be honesty and integrity, love and compassion, fairness and

equity, responsibility and accountability, and respect and tolerance of diversity. Other characteristics

included unity, courage, hospitality and stability. The survey revealed that 82% of the respondents

regarded honesty as one of the two most important characteristics for ethical behavior. 34% of those surveyed indicated the importance of tolerance followed by fairness (22%) compassion (18%), and responsibility (13%). Almost 30% of the respondents reported other values such as courage and wisdom. Surprisingly, almost 90% of those surveyed believed that actions taken in a given situation are either ethically right or ethically wrong.

DISCUSSION

Few fire service professionals would argue the importance of ethical conduct to the   image of their organization. Consideration should be given to the value systems of the individuals and their behavior as members of the fire service. Administrators must define and stringently enforce acceptable behavior of all employees. Sound written policies provide protection from litigation and public criticism.

This research project was originated to provide information and insight regarding ethics and codes of conduct to the Leawood Fire Department. The leaders of the department have endured a negative image from its members because of the actions of previous administrators. The intent of the project was to uncover a means to promote ethical behavior and therefore, alter the negative perception.

The research revealed that all organizations, whether private or public, must address the behavior of their employees. In order for continued organizational success, chief executives are responsible for the ethical practices of the individuals within the organization. Executives must promote ethical behavior by adopting a written code of conduct for their organization. Adopting a policy however, is only the initial phase of creating an ethical environment. Executives must enforce the established policy consistently for all employees regardless of position or rank. Further, management

must embrace the policy by continually making ethical behavior a way of life. Setting a positive example sends a clear message to subordinates of acceptable behavior.

The fact that the Leawood Fire Department has not established a written guideline has probably led to some negative perception. A written policy provides a yardstick by which all actions can be measured. Without a written policy, the standard can be inconsistently applied. The standard then may become either fluid in nature or non-existent. Even though actions may not be inappropriate, the lack of written guidelines can lead to the perception that some individuals have manipulated circumstances to their advantage.

The research also revealed love, respect, tolerance, honesty, and responsibility as critical elements of ethical behavior. Not surprisingly, honesty and integrity were mentioned most frequently in discussions about ethics. Honesty leads to mutual trust, a necessary component in all successful human relationships. By contrast, a lack of honesty and integrity can generate distrust and paranoia. Honesty is defined as adherence to the facts, but real honesty is more than stating facts or simply not lying. Honesty is openness and disclosure of all pertinent information.

Another critical element of ethics revealed by the literature was fairness. The Golden Rule may seem passe, but it readily applies to fairness. Fairness is dealing with others in a manner that would be acceptable if the situation were reversed. Fairness also involves not gaining advantage from information not widely known.

The difficulties experienced by the Leawood Fire Department could most probably be traced to these two elements. Information has, historically, been disseminated on a need-to-know basis. Policies and programs have been shrouded in secrecy until the moment of implementation. While this may have

been done to delay questions or criticism of new policies, this created a perception of connivance and disparate advantage.

The literature revealed the difficulty of establishing proper conduct in some complex situations. The five critical elements of ethical conduct help simplify these situations. Will the conduct stand the test of the light of day (honesty)? Would the conduct be fair if the situation was reversed (fairness)? Does the conduct exhibit respect for the dignity of others (respect)? Does the conduct assist others down the road of life (compassion)? Does the conduct promote community interests rather than individual gain (responsibility)? If the answers to these questions is yes, then it is probably safe to assume that the behavior is acceptable.

The survey revealed, surprisingly, that little training is offered to fire service personnel to assist them in handling ethical challenges. Over the course of their careers, firefighters will receive countless hours of instruction on fire suppression, prevention, and EMS to better prepare them to carry out the mission of the fire service. Periodically, training personnel on ethical issues would exhibit a standard of behavior and help prevent personnel avoid ethical traps.

On-duty training also enhances shared values and shared goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the opinion of the author that high ethical standards and moral conduct are of the utmost importance to the membership of the Leawood Fire Department. Ethical behavior of all personnel would reduce distrust and boost morale of Leawood firefighters. It is also the opinion of the author that the majority of the members perform with a high degree of ethics.

It is recommended that the department develop and distribute a survey instrument to better determine how other entities promote ethical behavior. An accurate sampling should include fire and police organizations across the United States as well as local business and civic leaders.

It is also recommended that the department develop and distribute a second survey instrument to the members of the Leawood Fire Department. This would enable the administration to determine the nature of perceived ethical problems and investigate possible solutions to those problems. This would also open avenues for meaningful dialogue within the department.

It is further recommended that the department develop and implement a behavioral standard or code of ethics for all employees. It is suggested that the standard be general enough to allow for individuality but specific enough to effectively gauge acceptability of actions. It is also suggested that the standard provide consistent disciplinary measures for inappropriate behavior of any and all employees. This would give the standard credibility and enhance the possibility of acceptance.

Finally, it is recommended that the department provide regular ethics training to all personnel. Initially, it is suggested that the training concentrate on familiarity with the new standard to increase employee understanding and impact. It is further suggested that further training include situational cases to enhance decision making skills.

The attitudes and behaviors of firefighters can drastically affect the public image of the fire department. It is incumbent on fire administrators to enforce high ethical standards to insure that the public image is affect in a positive manner.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP
RESEARCH PAPER

Ethics Survey Form

Directions: Please complete the following survey giving your reactions to the questions and situations. This information is to be provided anonymously. Do not indicate your name or the name of your department in any way. The results of this survey will be provided for your perusal at the end of the research period.

1   Does your department have a written ethics policy or code?

      A. Yes_   B. No_____

2. If the answer to question #1 is yes, is it regularly enforced? (otherwise proceed to question #3)

      A. Yes_____   B. No_____

3. Do your department Rules and Regulations address breaches of ethics as cause for disciplinary action?

      A. Yes_____   B. No_____

3. If the answer to question #3 is yes, is it regularly enforced? (otherwise proceed to questions #5)

      A. Yes_____   B. No_____

5. Does your department sponsor ethics training for employees?

      A. Yes_____   B. No_____

6. In your opinion, should fire executives and subordinates be held to the same ethical standard?

      A. Yes_____   B. No_____

7. If the answer to questions 6 is no, which should be held to a higher standard? (otherwise proceed to question #8)

      A. Fire Executives_____   B. Subordinates_____

8. With regard to ethics, are actions usually either right or wrong in a given situation?

      A. Yes_____   B. No_____

9. Which two of the following characteristics do you consider most important with regard to ethical behavior?

      A Compassion_____   B. Honesty_____   C. Fairness_____
      D. Responsibility   E. Tolerance_____   F. Other___

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP
RESEARCH PAPER

Ethics Survey Form

Directions: Please complete the following survey giving your reactions to the questions and situations. This information is to be provided anonymously. Do not indicate your name or the name of your department in any way. The results of this survey will be provided for your perusal at the end of the research period.

Does your department have a written ethics policy or code?

      A. Yes <u>4</u>   B. No <u>20</u>

2. If the answer to question #1 is yes, is it regularly enforced? (otherwise proceed to question #3)
      A. Yes <u>4</u>   B. No <u>0</u>

3. Do your department Rules and Regulations address breaches of ethics as cause for disciplinary action?
      A. Yes <u>5</u>   B. No <u>19</u>

4. If the answer to question #3 is yes, is it regularly enforced? (otherwise proceed to questions #5)
      A. Yes <u>4</u>   B. No   <u>1</u>

5. Does your department sponsor ethics training for employees?
      A. Yes <u>1</u>   B. No   <u>23</u>

6. In your opinion, should fire executives and subordinates be held to the same ethical standard?
      A. Yes <u>28</u>   B. No <u>39</u>

7. If the answer to questions 6 is no, which should be held to a higher standard? (otherwise proceed to question #8)
      A. Fire Executives   <u>30</u>   B. Subordinates   <u>9</u>

8. With regard to ethics, are actions usually either right or wrong in a given situation?
      A. Yes <u>60</u>   B. No <u>7</u>

9. Which two of the following characteristics do you consider most important with regard to ethical behavior?
A Compassion   <u>12</u>   B. Honesty   <u>55</u>   C. Fairness   <u>15</u>
D. Responsibility   <u>9</u>   E. Tolerance   <u>23</u>   D. Other   <u>20</u>

APPENDIX B

ETHICAL MODELS

American Society for Public Administration: *Code of Ethics*

The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) exists to advance the science, processes, and art of public administration. The Society affirms its responsibility to develop the spirit of professionalism within its membership, and to increase public awareness of ethical principles in public service by its example. To this end, we, the members of the Society, commit ourselves to the following principles:

I. Serve the Public Interest

Serve the Public, beyond serving oneself. ASPA members are committed to:

1. Exercise discretionary authority to promote the public interest.
2. Oppose all forms of discrimination and harassment, and promote affirmative action.
3. Recognize and support the public's right to know the public's business.
4. Involve citizens in policy decision-making.
5. Exercise compassion, benevolence, fairness and optimism.
6. Respond to the public in ways that are complete, clear, and easy to understand.
7. Assist citizens in their dealings with government.
8. Be prepared to make decisions that may not be popular.

II. Respect the Constitution and the Law

Respect, support, and study government constitutions and laws that define responsibilities of public agencies, employees, and all citizens. ASPA members are committed to:

1. Understand and apply legislation and regulations relevant to their professional role.
2. Work to improve and change laws and policies that are counter-productive or obsolete.
3. Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
4. Prevent all forms of mismanagement of public funds by establishing and maintaining strong fiscal and management controls, and by supporting audits and investigative activities.
5. Respect and protect privileged information.
6. Encourage and facility legitimate dissent activities in government and protect the whistleblowing rights of public employees.
7. Promote constitutional principles of equality, fairness, representativeness, responsiveness and due process in protecting citizens' rights.

III. Demonstrate Personal Integrity

Demonstrate the highest standards in all activities to inspire public confidence and trust in public service. ASPA members are committed to:

1. Maintain truthfulness and honesty and to not compromise them for advancement, honor,

or personal gain.
2. Ensure that others receive credit for their work and contributions.
3. Zealously guard against conflict of interest or its appearance: e.g., nepotism, improper outside employment, misuse of public resources or the acceptance of gifts.
4. Respect superiors, subordinates, colleagues and the public.
5. Take responsibility for their own errors.
6. Conduct official acts without partisanship.

IV. Promote Ethical Organizations

Strengthen organizational capabilities to apply ethics, efficiency and effectiveness in serving the public. ASPA members are committed to:

1. Enhance organizational capacity for open communication, creativity, and dedication.
2. Subordinate institutional loyalties to the public good.
3. Establish procedures that promote ethical behavior and hold individuals and organizations accountable for their conduct.
4. Provide organization members with an administrative means for dissent assurance of due process and safeguards against reprisal.
5. Promote merit principles that protect against arbitrary and capricious actions.
6. Promote organizational accountability through appropriate controls and procedures.
7. Encourage organizations to adopt, distribute, and periodically review a code of ethics as a living document.

V. Strive for Professional Excellence

Strengthen individual capabilities and encourage the professional development of others. ASPA members are committed to:

1. Provide support and encouragement to upgrade the professional development of others.
2. Accept as a personal duty the responsibility to keep up to date on emerging issues and potential problems.
3. Encourage others, throughout their careers, to participate in professional activities and associations.
4. Allocate time to meet with students and provide a bridge between classroom studies and the realities of public service.

Enforcement of the Code of Ethics shall be conducted in accordance with Article I, Section 4 of ASPA's Bylaws. In 1981 the American Society for Public Administration's National Council adopted a set of moral principles. Three years later in 1984, the council approved a Code of Ethics for ASPA members. In 1994 the Code was revised.